Stage by Stage
South Bank: 2002 – 2014

Stage by Stage
The Development of the National Theatre from 1848

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The majority of the photographs in the exhibition were commissioned by the National Theatre and are part of its archive

The exhibition was funded by The Royal National Theatre Foundation
Nicholas Hytner.
Photograph by Hugo Glendinning.
**2003**

Trevor Nunn’s last production as Director of the NT is Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, using largely the same company as for *Anything Goes*.

1 April, Nicholas Hytner takes over as Director of the NT, announcing a six-month season in the Olivier for which more than two-thirds of the tickets are £10. The opening production in the Travelex £10 Season is *Henry V*, with Adrian Lester in the title role.

The National presents its first-ever new opera: *Jerry Springer – The Opera* helps attract new audiences to the Lyttelton before transferring to the West End. Other West End transfers this year are *Anything Goes* to Theatre Royal, Drury Lane; *Jumpers* to the Piccadilly; *Vincent in Brixton* to the Playhouse; *Jerry Springer – The Opera* to the Cambridge; and *Dinner* to Wyndham’s.

New work in the Cottesloe includes Kwame Kwei-Armah’s *Elmina’s Kitchen*, Martin McDonagh’s *The Pillowman*, and Michael Frayn’s *Democracy*.

The epic production of *His Dark Materials* (Part I, Part II), a two-play adaptation by Nicholas Wright of Philip Pullman’s trilogy, is staged in the Olivier.


**2004**

The second Travelex £10 Season includes collaborations with Out of Joint (with David Hare’s *The Permanent Way*) and Complicite (with Simon McBurney’s production of *Measure for Measure*).

One of the National’s biggest-ever successes, Alan Bennett’s *The History Boys*, opens in the
Lyttelton. It goes on to tour all over the UK, to Hong Kong, New Zealand, Australia and Broadway, and to play in the West End in two separate runs, winning many awards in London and New York, as well as being made into a film.

*Primo*, based on Primo Levi’s *If This is a Man*, adapted by and starring Antony Sher, opens in the Cottesloe and goes on to transfer to Broadway and to be filmed for the BBC.

*Democracy* transfers to Wyndham’s and to Broadway; *The Pillowman* and *Elmina’s Kitchen* tour the UK and Ireland.

stagework.org the National’s new online resource, designed to make theatre practice at the NT and its regional partners more widely available to potential new audiences, is launched with material about *Henry V* and *His Dark Materials* (Part I, Part II), including film of rehearsals, performance, auditions and interviews.

**2005**

Collaborations with Kneehigh Theatre (on *Tristan & Yseult* in the Cottesloe) and Improbable (on *Theatre of Blood* in the Lyttelton), plus a co-production with Manchester Royal Exchange (for *On the Shore of the Wide World*, by Simon Stephens).

Director Mike Leigh’s first play for the National, *Two Thousand Years*, opens in the Cottesloe and later transfers to the Lyttelton.

DV8 visit the Lyttelton with *Just for Show*.

*Coram Boy*, adapted by Helen Edmundson from the novel by Jamila Gavin, continues the NT’s work for young people at Christmas in the Olivier. The first phase of the Big Wall project, produced in-house with Accenture technology, brings touch-screen exploration of the themes and background to *Coram Boy* to the NT foyers.

Bella Merlin’s *With the Rogue’s Company*, following the National’s first production of *Henry IV, Parts 1 & 2* is published as part of the series ‘The National Theatre at Work’.

The Studio moves to temporary premises at the Oval while waiting for the major refurbishment of its building on the Cut, which will also
provide a home for the NT Archive and a space for NT Education.

stagework.org receives Bafta and UN World Summit awards.

2006

Tony Kushner and Jeanine Tesori’s musical, *Caroline, or Change* and David Eldridge’s *Market Boy* each bring 32% of first-time bookers to the National. The Travelex £10 season continues to draw large audiences with classics like *The Alchemist* and *The Life of Galileo*. For some shows, up to 60% of ticket bookings are now taken on-line.

Three of the plays from 2005’s Connections series – Mark Ravenhill’s *Citizenship*, Enda Walsh’s *Chatroom*, and Deborah Gearing’s *Burn* – are given professional productions in the Cottesloe (*Burn/Chatroom/Citizenship*). Conor McPherson’s *The Seafarer* opens in the Cottesloe and later tours the UK and transfers to Broadway. *The History Boys* wins a record number of Tonys on Broadway. Katie Mitchell and her company’s version of Virginia Woolf’s novel *The Waves*, uses live video recording in a groundbreaking way.

The Baxter Theatre Centre production of *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* visits the Lyttelton with John Kani and Winston Ntshona playing the parts they originated thirty years earlier.

2007

Bernard Shaw returns to the NT stage with Marianne Elliott’s production of *Saint Joan* in the Olivier. Howard Davies’ production of Gorky’s *Philistines* is another of the year’s highlights. Kwame Kwei-Armah’s trilogy of plays about contemporary black Londoners is completed with *Statement of Regret*. An adaptation of Michael Morpurgo’s *War Horse* opens in the Olivier in a collaboration with Handspring Puppet Company: actors, working with magnificent life-sized horse puppets, conjure up the first world war.

The NT tours for 25 weeks with *Rafta, Rafta…*, *The History Boys*, and *Chatroom & Citizenship*. *Happy Days*, with Fiona Shaw in the main part, visits Paris, Madrid, Washington, New York, and Epidaurus, where its opening performance is seen by 6,000 people, probably the largest audience ever to see a Beckett play in one evening.

In September, the NT celebrates the centenary of its first director, Laurence Olivier, members
of his original NT company sharing a stage with members of the current company.

The NT Studio re-opens in November, after a £6 million refurbishment. It now houses the NT Archive alongside the John Lyon education studio as well as two large spaces for research and development work.

2008

The Deck opens: a summer entertainment space, perched on one of the top terraces of the NT.

After several years of negotiation, the National introduces Sunday performances for part of the year. This experiment is such a success that Sunday opening is permanently adopted in 2009, increasing the NT’s capacity by 2,000 seats a week and enabling it to participate fully in the popular weekend life of the South Bank.

The NT Education department is relaunched as Discover with a programme of events, workshops, and ways to get involved with the National Theatre – for people of all ages.

Peter Handke’s wordless play *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other* is staged in the Lyttelton – it has a cast of 25 playing 450 characters. *The History Boys* is revived in the West End, at Wyndham’s Theatre. Carl Heap’s adaptation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* tours primary schools; Howard Brenton’s play about Harold Macmillan, *Never So Good*, with Jeremy Irons in the lead role, is a big success in the Lyttelton; and Ralph Fiennes plays Sophocles’ Oedipus to acclaim in the Olivier. Rebecca Lenkiewicz’s *Her Naked Skin* is the first play by a woman to be staged in the Olivier; a co-production with Live Theatre Newcastle of Lee Hall’s *The Pitmen Painters*, begins a hugely successful run at the National, first in the Cottesloe, later in the Lyttelton and on tour; and Steppenwolf from Chicago visit the NT with *August: Osage County* by Tracy Letts.

With the Travelex £10 season in its seventh year, three of the four £10 productions are new plays.

2009

Tom Stoppard’s play for six actors and 42 musicians, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, plays twice-nightly in the Olivier in a co-production with Southbank Sinfonia, and returns in 2010.

NT Live, digital broadcasting worldwide of live NT performances, starts with a showing of *Phèdre*, starring Helen Mirren, which is seen on a single day by almost as many people as attend its three-month run in the Lyttelton.

The NT Studio hosts a series of international exchanges – with China, Georgia and Poland. With *Happy Days*, *The Year of Magical Thinking* and a revival of *Waves* touring, the NT is on the road for 21 weeks.

*War Horse* transfers to the New London Theatre under the NT’s management, with long-term partners NT Angels, and a documentary, *Making War Horse* is shown on More 4 and released as a DVD.

The millionth Travelex £10 ticket is sold. Each successive year, almost 25% of audiences for these productions have been first-time bookers.

The summer outdoor festival Watch This Space includes a new performance area, Square2, where productions from Poland and France are shown to sell-out audiences.

Repertoire highlights include, as well as *Phèdre*, Richard Bean’s controversial

The Fire Garden as part of Watch This Space. Photograph by Ludovic des Cognets.
England People Very Nice; Peter Flannery’s version of the Russian screenplay Burnt by the Sun; Alan Bennett’s The Habit of Art, about Benjamin Britten and WH Auden; David Hare’s investigation of the financial crisis, The Power of Yes; and Katie Mitchell’s stage version of Dr Seuss’ The Cat in the Hat, the National’s first show for 3-6-year-olds, which was filmed for a DVD, released in 2010.

2010
Planning permission is secured for National Theatre Future, an ambitious £70million redevelopment project to meet and deliver the NT’s artistic and strategic aims of lifelong learning, nurturing the future of theatre, sustainability, continuous innovation and unparalleled experiences for audiences. A personal philanthropic gift of £10million from Lloyd Dorfman leads the £70million fundraising target, with support from the Clore Duffield Foundation to establish a Clore Learning Centre.

With War Horse in the West End, NT Live reaching hundreds of cinemas, and touring, the National reaches audiences of 1.6 million worldwide: a record number.

The year’s successes include Fela!, a celebration of the Nigerian musician and activist Fela Kuti; Boucicault’s London Assurance, starring Simon Russell Beale and Fiona Shaw; two youthful plays from American giants Tennessee Williams and Eugene O’Neill from the Royal & Derngate, Northampton:

Spring Storm and Beyond the Horizon; Bulgakov’s The White Guard in a version by Andrew Upton; a revival of Terence Rattigan’s little known After the Dance; Ena Lamont Stewart’s neglected 1930s Glasgow drama, Men Should Weep; Hamlet with Rory Kinnear in the name part; and a co-production with Headlong of Mike Bartlett’s Earthquakes in London. Alan Bennett’s The Habit of Art tours to nine dates in the UK following its sell-out Lyttelton run.

2011
NT audiences are further boosted with the growth of National Theatre Live and War Horse – which, as well as running at the New London Theatre, is also now at Lincoln Center, New York (where it garners five Tony Awards), and in Toronto – reaching 2.3 million worldwide.

Like other regularly funded companies, the Arts Council grant to the National is cut by 7% in 2011-12, with a further cut to come in 2012-13. Despite the resulting challenges,
its recent strong financial performance, the National is confident of being able not only to sustain current activity levels but to continue to innovate and grow.

Danny Boyle’s production of *Frankenstein*, with Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller alternating the roles of Doctor and Creature, sells out the Olivier. To celebrate his 80th birthday, Peter Hall directs his daughter Rebecca in *Twelfth Night* in the Cottesloe. Playwright Alecky Blythe and composer Adam Cork’s *London Road*, a unique piece of music-theatre developed at the NT Studio, opens in the Cottesloe to acclaim. To accommodate an extension of its run, the National opens its backstage scenic studio, the Paintframe, for public performance for the first time, to present four short plays by writers new to the NT under the title *Double Feature*.

Richard Bean’s *One Man, Two Guvnors*, based on Goldoni’s *The Servant of Two Masters*, with songs by Grant Olding, opens in the Lyttelton with James Corden leading the company, touring the UK and transferring to the West End’s Adelphi and later (with a new cast) the Haymarket. Mike Leigh returns to the Cottesloe with a new play, *Grief*, created with his usual creative team and a company of actors.

As part of the celebrations for the 400th anniversary of the *King James Bible*, a series of readings with leading actors is presented in the Lyttelton. John Hodge’s new play about Stalin and Bulgakov, *Collaborators*, provides leading roles for Alex Jennings and Simon Russell Beale. Lenny Henry makes his NT debut in Shakespeare’s *The Comedy of Errors*.

2012
Enabling work begins on NT Future; the £70m fundraising campaign includes a capital investment grant of £17.5m from the Arts Council. Linking every aspect is a vision of openness: making the theatre, its history, its productions and crafts, its artists and staff, visible and accessible to a wider public.

In the year of The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee and London’s hosting of the Olympics, the National presents Inside Out, a summer-long programme on the riverside squares and terraces, featuring workshops, plays, performances, and a pop-up bar, Propstore, created from the set of *The Comedy of Errors*. On the day of the river pageant, Joey, the principal puppet from *War Horse*, salutes the Queen from the top of the fly-tower, as she passes on the Royal Barge. In October, *War Horse* celebrates the fifth anniversary of its opening; its sell-out run at the New London Theatre continues.

Travelex mark their tenth year of sponsoring the Travelex £12 Tickets season and extend their support until 2015. The season includes Olivier transfers for *Collaborators* and *London
Road, as well as Simon Russell Beale in *Timon of Athens*.

Two of the year’s sell-out shows – *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, based on Mark Haddon’s award-winning novel and adapted by Simon Stephens, and Stephen Beresford’s new play *The Last of the Haussmans* starring Julie Walters – set new audience records for National Theatre Live broadcasts. *One Man, Two Guvnors* transfers to Broadway for a six-month run, while continuing its West End success and embarking on a second UK tour. James Graham’s *This House*, about the 1970s crisis in the Government Whips’ office, transfers from the Cottesloe to the Olivier. Lucy Prebble’s *The Effect* is the last play to be staged in the Cottesloe before its transformation to the Dorfman in 2014.

2013

During the closure for redevelopment of the National’s smallest auditorium, a red temporary theatre, designed by Haworth Tompkins, occupies Theatre Square; its opening production is *Table*, a new play by Tanya Ronder, directed by Rufus Norris. Other work presented there during the year includes a solo performance by Rhys Ifans in Tim Price’s *Protest Song*; *Home* created and directed by Nadia Fall, about residents of an inner city hostel; and Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig’s *The World of Extreme Happiness*, set in contemporary China.

Alan Bennett’s two short plays, *Hymn* and *Cocktail Sticks*, transfer to the Duchess as *Untold Stories; The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* moves to the Apollo. Four National Theatre productions are now playing simultaneously in the West End.

*The Light Princess*, a new musical by Tori Amos and Samuel Adamson, has its premiere in the Lyttelton, with an award-winning performance by Rosalie Craig as its floating heroine. Shakespeare is represented in the Olivier by Nicholas Hytner’s production of *Othello* with Adrian Lester and Rory Kinnear; while in the temporary theatre and touring London schools is Ben Power’s adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* for young audiences.

Also for younger audiences *Emil and the Detectives*, directed by Bijan Sheibani, is a triumph of stage-management organisation, as 180 schoolchildren in three teams play...
Emil’s detective friends. A group of pachyderm puppets invades the temporary theatre, in an adaptation of Ross Collins’ *The Elephantom*.

On 22 October, the 50th anniversary of *Hamlet* opening at the Old Vic, HM The Queen visits the National Theatre with The Duke of Edinburgh. They visit workshops backstage and watch rehearsals of scenes for *50 Years on Stage*, a celebration involving 100 actors from every decade of the Theatre’s existence, which takes place a few nights later in the Olivier and is broadcast live on BBC Two and to cinemas worldwide. 50th anniversary celebrations also include a two-part BBC *Arena* documentary on the Theatre’s history, and an award-winning app, *50 Years of the National Theatre*.

Following the collapse of the Apollo Theatre ceiling during a performance of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, free performances of the production are given for students from 14 secondary schools in east London and at Rambert Dance Studios, the NT’s new neighbour on the South Bank. *Curious Incident* resumes its West End run at the Gielgud the following summer.

The announcement is made that Rufus Norris will be the NT’s next Director when Nicholas Hytner leaves in 2015, with Tessa Ross as Chief Executive.

**2014**

The UK and Dublin tour of *War Horse*, which began in 2013, continues throughout 2014, and also visits South Africa; the US tour takes in another 37 cities; *War Horse* also visits Brisbane, Australia; a German-language production opens in Berlin; and a Dutch-language production in Amsterdam before touring the Netherlands. Later in the year, an exhibition in Shanghai and Beijing heralds the Mandarin production which will open in 2015, in partnership with the National Theatre of China.

Sam Mendes directs Simon Russell Beale as King Lear in the Olivier, to great acclaim.

A new play by Richard Bean, *Great Britain*, about the press, police and politics, is rehearsed in complete secrecy, opening in the Lyttelton just after the Old Bailey trial involving phone-hacking comes to its end, and then transferring to the Theatre Royal, Haymarket.

As the referendum on Scottish independence is held, a co-production with the National Theatre of Scotland and the Edinburgh International Festival – *The James Plays*, three new works by Rona Munro about the first three Stewart kings of Scotland – opens in the Olivier after their premiere at the Edinburgh Festival.
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time opens at the Barrymore Theatre on Broadway, produced from the NT’s New York office.

The £80 million radical transformation of the National Theatre known as NT Future starts to become a reality. The Dorfman Theatre (the renamed Cottesloe) opens with Here Lies Love from the Public Theater, New York: an immersive musical experience by David Byrne and Fatboy Slim about Imelda Marcos. The Clore Learning Centre opens its doors to a full programme of educational workshops and courses for all ages; and the Sherling High-Level Walkway allows audiences to watch what is happening in the NT’s production workshops.

In 2013-14 National Theatre Live broadcasts of theatre performances from the NT and elsewhere reach audiences of 1.49 million, a growth of over 200% since it began in 2009. They include War Horse from the New London Theatre, which is seen by 322,000 people with more encore screenings to follow.

In 2013-14 the National Theatre’s paying audience reaches 4.3 million people worldwide; 2.8 million are in the UK, about half of that number outside London. Between September 2013 and November 2015, with 80 visits to towns and cities across the UK, around 1.3 million people will see an NT production on tour in their local theatre.

Arts Council funding, which has declined 25% in real terms since 2010-11, represents 17% of the turnover; box office receipts account for 65%.